

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

January 12, 2012
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Tanaka, Commissioners Bishop, Glass, Larrivee, Simas

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Jokinen, Lampe

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Krawczyk, Kevin McDonald, Michael Ingram, Eric Miller, Department of Transportation

OTHERS PRESENT: Joe Story, DKS Associates

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Chair Tanaka who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Jokinen and Lampe, both of whom were excused.

Chair Tanaka introduced new Commissioner Vic Bishop and noted that he has been active in civic activities in Bellevue and has an extensive background in traffic engineering. He said Commissioner Bishop was chosen from one of the largest and most talented applicant pools the Commission has seen in some time.

Commissioner Bishop said he has lived in the area for more than 40 years and currently lives on West Lake Sammamish Parkway and serves as president of the West Lake Sammamish Parkway Homeowners Association. He said his area of expertise is traffic engineering and has been retired since 2007.

3. STAFF REPORTS

Senior Project Manager Paul Krawczyk informed the Commissioners that memo worked on in 2011 by the Commission regarding the mobility initiative projects will finally be included in a City Council packet, though just for informational purposes. The Council discussion on the

topic continues to be delayed.

4. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCILS,
BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Larrivee reported that the Eastgate/I-90 CAC has selected a preferred alternative and will present it to the Council on January 17. Pending input from the Council, the CAC will turn its hand to the task of developing its final report.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Linda D'Amato, 10650 NE 9th Place, said the residents of Washington Square want to see the city move up in priority the midblock crossing of 106th Avenue NE at NE 9th Place. The Washington Square development has two towers that together have approximately 350 dwelling units. The development is situated a block and a half from Bellevue Square. Residents must cross 106th Avenue NE in order to access the Bellevue Collection, and a safer crossing is needed. People are crossing even in the dark, weaving in between cars.

Mr. Mark D'Amato, 10650 NE 9th Place, said the city over the years has done an excellent job of improving mobility in the downtown, and he said he certainly understands the budget issues the city is currently facing. He voiced his support for the proposed midblock crossing of 106th Avenue NE at NE 9th Place and said he would like to see it moved up in priority. The crossing is needed for safety reasons. People coming from the Ashwood neighborhood and NE 10th Street are funneled through the Washington Square development to the crossing of 106th Avenue NE at NE 9th Place, and as vacancy rates for downtown residential units decreases, the number of pedestrians seeking to cross the busy streets increases. Two new developments are planned for the immediate vicinity, one on the southwest corner of the Washington Square block, and the PACE project on the northeast corner of the Hyatt block. Both of those will require construction access from 106th Avenue NE. Moving the midblock crossing up in priority makes sense, and it should not be that expensive to construct.

Mr. Jim Stanton with Microsoft said he works in real estate, facilities and community affairs for the company. He said he has been serving as a member of the Eastgate/I-90 CAC and is also a member of the Bellevue Downtown Association. He said he is a planner by training, previously worked for 17 years for the city of Redmond, and was involved in the original BROTS land use and transportation plan. Microsoft has expanded greatly in downtown Bellevue over the past several years and currently has some 6500 employees in the downtown working in 1.3 million square feet of office space. The online services division is based in the downtown and is growing. Given the slowdown in construction activity over the past two or three years, Microsoft has taken the time to look at ways to knit its Redmond campus together. The focus has been on better support for pedestrians, those who take transit, bicycle

commuters, recreation and a variety of other things that make the campus a functional supportive environment for the employees. Several things have been learned from the exercise. Employees are interested in transportation efficiency but the qualitative experience as well. Pedestrians and cyclists are interested in safe and protective environments in terms of sidewalks and bike lanes, but they are also interested in bicycle storage, lockers, and the ability to trip a crossing signal at intersections. In some instances they have called for grade separation. Lighting, pavement markings, and weather protection for pedestrians and transit riders have all been highlighted. Microsoft has embarked on a multi-year program to incorporate many of those improvements on the campus. Microsoft employees, particularly those who cycle to work, have highlighted the need for better connections outside the downtown. The regional improvement mentioned most often is extending the SR-520 trail to Bellevue Way and from there down 112th Avenue NE to downtown Bellevue. While the missing links have been identified in city plans, they are understandably expensive. The focus needs to be on how to publically and privately support them.

7. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus.

8. STUDY SESSION

A. Downtown Transportation Plan Update

Senior Planner Kevin McDonald presented to the Commission the transportation issues scoping report and said the report is the culmination of months of work and community outreach. He noted that the report has three sections: an overview of the downtown transportation plan, a summary of the public comments received organized by mode, and detailed notes of the comments made by those who participated in the outreach events.

The current downtown subarea plan was adopted in 2004. The Council has given direction to update the transportation portion of the plan looking out to 2030. Their intent is to accommodate updated growth forecasts, which for 2030 projects 70,300 employees and 19,000 residents in the downtown. Over the last seven or eight years, there have also been a lot of projects built and a lot of planning work done, all of which needs to be accounted for in the updated subarea plan. The role of the Transportation Commission will be to help the community develop a multimodal strategy for the downtown.

Mr. McDonald said the Council has the guiding principles for the update work under review. The consolidated input is slated to be submitted to the Council on February 6. With their approval, the update work to develop project ideas will be able to kick off. The Council previously directed the most broad-based and inclusive outreach possible, both with traditional outreach methods and new techniques.

The measures of effectiveness that were approved in December 2011 are both qualitative and quantitative metrics that will help develop and evaluate project ideas that are responsive to the community. They will be used to screen out projects that will not be effective in ensuring mobility for all, and to prioritize and move forward projects that will be effective. The measures have been structured based on mode so as to easily be able to isolate the benefit of individual projects and to compare the benefits between modes. Rather than vehicular mobility, the measures of effectiveness are based on personal mobility.

Commissioner Larrivee asked if consideration has ever been given to separating out freight from the other modes in terms of measures of effectiveness. Mr. McDonald said freight travel is encompassed in the supplemental measures of effectiveness. It is covered to some degree in the metrics of travel time along corridors and on-street loading. Joe Story with DKS Associates explained that many communities have begun using the overlay concept for addressing freight. The tricky thing about freight is that there are different kinds of freight issues depending on the size of the truck delivering the freight. Certainly most freight issues as they relate to the downtown area will be associated with delivery of goods.

Commissioner Bishop pointed out that moving freight and moving people are not the same. Mr. McDonald agreed to work on developing an additional measure for freight.

Mr. McDonald reviewed with the Commissioners the measures of effectiveness by mode. He noted that for private vehicles, the measures will include standard quantitative measures, such as delay at intersections, travel times along corridors, and the number of on-street parking spaces. For pedestrian mobility, the measures will include a combination of qualitative and quantitative metrics, including intersection crosswalk ratings, corridor walk times, and the experience of pedestrians walking along a street or at a midblock crossing. Bicycle mobility measures will include the bicycle facility rating, which is a composite of a variety of individual measures. For transit riders, the measures will focus on intersections, bus stops, light rail stations, and all components that make transit riding safe and efficient as well as transit corridor travel times.

Mr. McDonald said the community involvement process to date has included a number of meetings with downtown stakeholders, a community-wide open house, a couple of bicycle tours in conjunction with the BDA and the Cascade Bicycle Club, and a couple of walking audits in conjunction with Feet First. A project website has been launched which serves as the repository for all pertinent information about the downtown plan update. Traditional press releases have been drafted and released. The social media outlets Facebook and Twitter have been used to push out information to the community. The blogosphere has picked up on the downtown transportation plan and has put information out on several different blogs, and that has generated a number of comments. The stakeholder groups that have been involved include the BDA, the Chamber of Commerce, the Eastside Transportation Association, the Building Owners and Managers Association, and the Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative.

The hot topics for pedestrians have turned out to be intersections, crosswalks, midblock crossings, and the need to sign as open for public use the easements that run through developments in the downtown. The issues highlighted by the bicycle community include on-street bicycle facilities, improved north-south and east-west bicycle connections within the downtown and between regional destinations, parking for bicycles, bicycle wayfinding, improved maintenance of facilities, education and enforcement. There was no specific outreach conducted to transit riders, but nonetheless the stakeholder groups stressed speed and reliability, lane designations and signal operations, pedestrian and bicycle access to transit, and improved transit access generally. Outreach specific to drivers and passengers concerning the roadway system was also not done, but the comments received highlighted the need to maintain cross-town connections, particularly east-west between I-405 and the major employment and shopping destinations in the heart of the downtown, the overall traffic flow, and on-street parking and loading.

Commissioner Simas noted that the bulk of the comments registered have been about pedestrian, bicycle and commuting. There are people using vehicles to get into and out of the downtown, but no one has really highlighted their needs. The forecast is that in the future as many as 70,000 people will be working in the downtown, and like it or not most of them will probably get to and from work in a personal vehicle. He agreed that bicycle parking facilities are needed in the downtown. With regard to midblock pedestrian crossings, he suggested that if there is data that shows they offer a safer way to cross a street than at intersections, they should become a priority. Likewise, if there is data that shows one-way streets reduce conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists and vehicles, consideration should be given to that approach.

Commissioner Larrivee praised the efforts of the staff to reach out and seek comments and ideas from the various user groups ahead of developing new plans and proposals. He reiterated the fact that pedestrians come with a variety of needs and limitations.

Commissioner Bishop asked when the travel demand forecasting work will get under way. Mr. McDonald allowed that the modeling resources have until just recently all been consumed by the Eastgate/I-90 project. Given that that project is wrapping up, the resources will be turned loose on the downtown.

Transit
Answering a question asked by Commissioner Bishop, Mr. Story said the challenge for Bellevue will be in making sure the right numbers are plugged into the modesplit model for ~~pedestrians and bicycles~~. In jumping from 7000 downtown residents to 19,000 residents will certainly change the splits for those modes of travel. Their movements will impact everything from signal timing to safety. The ~~pedestrian~~ data in particular will be critical and there are a variety of factors to take into consideration, most notably overall capacity for riders, seating and standing capacity for waiting riders, and how the riders will get to and from the transit stops.

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Chair Tanaka allowed that many transit issues are outside the control of Bellevue. However, to the extent the city can do things that will encourage people to use transit, those things should be done. Scheduling and certainty are barriers to ridership; riders need to know where the buses go and what transfers they will need to make, and making it easy for riders to learn what they need to know will help. Real time information and general wayfinding elements are what provides riders with certainty.

Mr. McDonald said the Council will be provided with an update on February 6, and hopefully at that meeting the planning principles will be approved. He reviewed with the Commission the project timeline.

Commissioner Larrivee asked if a delay in getting the principles approved will delay the overall project. Mr. McDonald said the principles guide both the process and the outcome. The work would be hamstrung by not having the principles approved. The work done to date, however, is certainly not off track with respect to the principles, and it is expected that the Council will not significantly change them.

B. Transportation Facilities Plan (TFP) Update

Senior Transportation Planner Michael Ingram noted that during the last study session with the Commission questions were raised about the roadway/intersection scoring criteria for safety. He commented that after reviewing the issue the staff have agreed with the position taken by the Commission that points could potentially be given to projects that had little or no safety benefit. Accordingly, the matrix will be revised.

Mr. Ingram commented that the Commission had also raised concerns about the plan consistency and outside funding criteria; the issue was that the focus should be on the portion of a project covered by an outside grant rather than the fact that a project is eligible for a small or large grant. He said staff agreed with the Commission on that point as well. However, it cannot be known up front in the early stage of a project how much will be covered by an outside grant.

Commissioner Glass said if staff cannot know early on whether a project will qualify for a percentage of funding, outside funding should not be an evaluation criteria. Mr. Ingram said it is usually possible to identify how competitive a project might be. Capital Programming Manager Eric Miller said what staff can tell early on is what grant program a project will be eligible for. Some grant programs have multi-million-dollar grant awards, while others have caps that are far lower, and projects eligible for larger grants should be given more points in the scoring system.

Commissioner Larrivee said it appeared to him that for purposes of the initial weighting exercise, a project that is a likely candidate for outside funding should get a higher score. Down the road when things are clearer about project costs and the percentage that could be

covered by outside funding will be the time to apply a secondary filter that gives the project a higher score.

Commissioner Bishop expressed surprise that level of service is given only 25 percent in the roadway/intersection scoring, and that transit and non-motorized together add up to 35 percent. Mr. Miller said the weighting particulars were all established by the Commission and as such can be revised by the Commission.

Mr. Ingram noted that questions have previously been asked by the Commission about the ped-bike project scoring criteria, particularly the proposal for integrating ADA considerations into the scoring matrix. The comment was made that the proposal would in effective double count some of the population characteristics relating to ADA. He said the staff concurred and the proposed regulations included in the packet materials expand and amend the description of land use to more fully capture ADA population needs relative to accessing facilities.

Mr. Miller sought from the Commissioners approval of the criteria to use going forward. He noted that in the coming meetings the focus will shift to evaluating and scoring specific projects.

Commissioner Bishop asked what the integration process is for roadway and ped-bike projects. Mr. Miller said integrating the projects is less objective and the Commission has for many years struggled with finding a way to fairly rank projects in the two categories. A number of factors come into play, including community input, the political environment, project costs and their benefits.

Commissioner Glass suggested that level of service should be given its due, but if a project that scores high in that category may not score high in terms of safety, transit, plan consistency or outside funding. Mr. Miller said when the scored list of projects is brought back to the Commission, those particulars will be taken into consideration.

Chair Tanaka commented that level of service is obviously important, but projects focused more on safety and the like should not suffer as a result of being compared to a level of service project.

Commissioner Simas said he sees the scoring criteria as guidelines rather than hard and fast rules. If the percentages were exactly right, a computer could be relied on to make all the ranking decisions. The job of the Commission is to look at the scoring results and apply common sense adjustments.

Mr. Ingram said the projects to be scored and evaluated will include those on the current TFP, projects that were evaluated for but not included in the current TFP, projects identified by the Eastgate/I-90 study, projects that may be identified in the downtown plan update, projects needed to coordinate with the Sound Transit East Link project, and emerging needs and

opportunities identified by staff.

Commissioner Glass commented that whenever possible specific projects associated with the East Link project should be identified.

Commissioner Bishop asked if concurrency hotspots are captured in one of the project categories. Mr. Miller said intersections with poor V/C ratios will likely have a project recommendation for how to address the issue, and those projects will be included in the mix.

Turning to the ped-bike candidate projects, Mr. Ingram said they will be taken from the current TFP, projects identified in the Eastgate/I-90 plan, pedestrian projects identified in the ped-bike plan as high priority, bicycle projects located on priority bicycle corridors, projects identified to coordinate with the East Link project, and projects identified by staff needed to address emerging needs and opportunities.

Commissioner Bishop asked what the city has done about planning safe walks to school. Mr. Ingram said those projects are included in the ped-bike plan. Mr. Miller said even before that plan was developed the city worked with the school district in developing school walk maps.

Commissioner Larrivee asked if the 106th Avenue NE at NE 9th Place midblock crossing has been identified as an emerging need. Mr. Ingram said the downtown plan update process will help to sort out that question. Mr. Miller noted that the midblock crossing program that previously was in the CIP is not in the current CIP. The project could be funded again.

Commissioner Simas asked if the natural flow of pedestrians is looked at in developing projects. Mr. Miller said that is a development review question that he would be happy to raise with the land use side. Certainly taking into account where people want to go is an important element.

Mr. Ingram said the ped-bike projects list will end up being quite large. It will include a number of fairly small scale projects that historically have not scored all that well in the TFP process. He suggested handling those projects through a separate process using a model based on the Neighborhood Sidewalk Program.

Commissioner Glass said he liked that idea but suggested it might work better in the CIP process where there are actual dollars to work with.

Mr. Miller reminded the Commissioners that during the last TFP process the focus was on the roadway and intersection projects. The ped-bike plan update was going on at the same time. The Council identified a ped-bike placeholder within the mobility and infrastructure initiative and the Commission was tasked with identifying projects that fit the funding. The projects selected were geographically distributed. The Commission recommended including in the TFP the top ten unfunded projects.

The Commission voiced approval for the roadway/intersection and ped-bike scoring criteria as proposed.

Mr. Ingram reviewed with the Commissioners the public involvement elements. He noted that as envisioned, there would be four public meetings in areas around the city; a web-based survey; and supporting elements including news articles or notices in various publications, and a project website.

Commissioner Larrivee urged the staff to be as creative as possible in seeking input from citizens on projects the public believes should be included.

Commissioner Simas proposed including a public involvement notice in the PTSA newsletter.

Mr. Ingram said staff will present to the Commission in February a proposed list of roadway/intersection and ped-bike candidate projects, along with additional information and updates regarding the public involvement process.

9. OLD BUSINESS – None

10. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Glass suggested the Commission would benefit by having an update regarding the new coordinated signal program that is being implemented. Mr. Krawczyk said he would look into that, noting that the second phase of the five-phase program is currently under way.

Commissioner Glass asked if any analysis has been or is being conducted regarding NE 8th Street following completion of the new I-5/SR-520 ramp. He commented that the weave is very interesting to observe, especially rookies unfamiliar with how the weave is supposed to be done.

11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. November 20, 2011

Chair Tanaka said he received from Commissioner Lampe a proposal to revise the first sentence of the fourth paragraph on page 4 by changing "...mode split in the downtown will be 40 percent..." to "...mode split in the downtown is forecasted to be 40 percent...."

Motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Larrivee. Second was

by Commissioner Simas and the motion carried unanimously.


13. REVIEW COMMISSION CALENDAR AND AGENDA

The Commission reviewed the list of agenda items for upcoming meetings.

Commissioner Simas said he would like a review of what is happening to traffic flow through Bellevue given that tolling on SR-520 is in play.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Tanaka adjourned the meeting at 8:49 p.m.



Secretary to the Transportation Commission

3/8/12

Date



Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

3/8/12

Date